The Lord Delays His Coming

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Has the coming return of our Lord been delayed? If so, why? Maybe this was not only necessary, but likely foreseen and planned for from the beginning. If this is true, then there must be some evidence of it in the sacred Scriptures. This evidence will be offered first. Jesus did not "play around with words." The very implication indicating what could take place in what He spoke, certainly indicates that such would come to pass: quoting just a few passages now and then later make some comments on them as well as others.

In the parable of the servants who were to be watchful for their master's return (Luke 12:35-48), although not specifically stated, there seems to be an indication that the master, who had gone away for some reason, did not return just when the servants had expected, and thus we read of the servant who said "my master is delaying his coming" (12:45) and begins to be irresponsible and careless, instead of faithfully watching for his master's return and to be attentive in diligently seeking to take care of his master's business.

In Matthew 25:1-13, in the parable of the ten virgins, because of the expectancy of nearness of arrival, the virgins went out to meet the bridegroom, but "while the bridegroom was delayed" they became weary of waiting and began to slumber and sleep.

In Revelation 7:1-3, we read of four angels holding the four winds (of judgment) to be released on the earth. Evidently the angels had already had their instructions as to the time of their release, but another angel comes on the scene and tells them to "hold" the winds "till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads" (indicating that more time was needed and thus a delay).

In Revelation 8:1-6, when the seventh seal was opened, and the seven trumpets prepared to sound, suddenly "there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." When you read the book of Revelation, you will find that it is based on a pattern that first something happens in heaven, then as a consequence, certain events take place on earth. This pattern is repeated over and over to show that God controls the historical progression of events on earth by His pre-planned symbolic portrayal of certain Divinely ordained actions in heaven. What then can we conclude about the fact that suddenly interposed in these symbolic acts in heaven, just before the seventh seal is opened, (which is the number of the church), and during which seal all events concerning the church (including the translation of the first fruits saints) come to their final climax and conclusion; that suddenly there is interposed a half hour of silence. This could only mean (based on the pattern of the book of Revelation) that certain Divinely initiated events that were to transpire on earth are "held in abeyance;" in other words, "a delay." And this delay has to do with His church. And as we have seen from other scriptures, there is a definitely an indication of a delay in Jesus' return with regard to certain "elect" ones, and the subsequent judgements to follow.

Just what time schedule is God's "measuring stick" in Revelation 8:1, it is unknown. But certainly, one half hour in heaven would have nothing to do with the way man measures such time on earth. We do know that the Word of God indicates that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). Based on this time perspective, an hour would equate to just over forty-one years, and a half an hour to approximately twenty and a half years. However, since it says "about the space of half and hour", we would have to allow a variance of several years longer or shorter. Now this is not saying this is the correct interpretation of this, nor that the Lord in His divine providence definitely determined to "delay" His coming about twenty years. Even if we could say we knew this, we have no way of knowing the time (date) when such a "delay" began.

We can know by the "signs" that His coming is closer. One "sign" that occurred in June, 1967, during the six-day war, the Israeli army captured the entire city of Jerusalem (half of which had been under Arab control until that time). This meant that for the first time Jerusalem was no longer "trodden down" by the Gentiles since it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 586 B.C., and thus indicating that possibly the "times of the Gentiles" had come to an end (see Luke 21:24), and that this age was about

over. There was also the impact in the sixties and beyond of the dramatic "Jesus movement" among multiplied thousands of young people and the "charismatic movement" which reached into most traditional "main-line" denominations with the message of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit including many of Catholic background. There were a number of signs on the world scene also. For many there was a very vivid sense of the Lord's very soon return.

In His plan, we know that there will come a date beyond which He will absolutely no longer delay. In Revelation 10:5-7, we read of a "mighty angel" raising up His hand to heaven and swearing by Him who lives forever, that there would be "delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished." (The correct translation *is* "that there should be delay no longer.") This terminates the delay period so that the mystery of God should be completed. The mystery, as revealed to the apostle Paul, has to do with the church, and the Lord cannot complete His purpose for the church in the climactic stages of this age until He returns and "calls out" (the word "church" means "called out ones") that portion of His church which is to be His bride (translating and glorifying their bodies). Then and only then can His "mystery" concerning the rest of the church be finished.

Now if, as the scriptures certainly seem to indicate, the Lord had a preordained plan to "delay" His return to planet earth, then there must be a reason or several reasons which were foreseen by Divine providence as a necessary part of such a strategy. We will suggest the following six reasons:

First, the delay provides the Lord with the opportunity to test Christians under certain circumstances that would not be possible in any other way. The Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents (motives) of the heart (Hebrews 4:12), but such "discerning" or "judging" of our motives is most "revealing" when exposed in the context of definite events and circumstances in the experiences of our lives.

When contemplating this in light of what I consider the overwhelming evidence and multitudinous signs which been present and increasing over a number of years, most Christians who are aware of this and living in expectancy of the Lord's return, tend to have a greater motivation to give themselves to seeking the Lord, study of His word and generally want to live in the conscious awareness of how to please the Lord. However, when year after year goes by and the Lord has not returned, the human tendency, even among Christians, is to lose the "cutting edge" of their spiritual interest and "pursuit" of Christ as the primary focus of their lives, and become somewhat careless and indifferent, or even worse begin to turn to more "worldly pursuits" and like the steward of Luke 12:45 let the carnality of the heart get the "upper hand" in one's life and attitudes.

The language of Luke 12:45 need not just be taken absolutely literally, but indicative of an attitude of selfish ambition which begins to take advantage of others for one's own advancement, and the "imbibing" of the "spirit" of this world to where one becomes insensitive to spiritual things. The ultimate in this process is described in Matthew 24:12; "and because lawlessness shall abound, the love of many (Christians) shall grow cold." The increasing allurements of a pleasure-mad world become too much to resist, and love for the Lord gets put into "cold storage."

Tragically, this has happened: People whose dedication to the Lord seemed to be solid and steadfast; but as time goes by, (the Lord delays His coming), allurements of the world increase, and gradually these people drift into worldly pursuits, sometimes even flagrant sin, and this "testing time" of the Lord's delay finds them woefully wanting.

Secondly, the Lord's delay gives more time for the bride to get ready. I heard a man give his testimony of how, as a truck driver, he had a nearly fatal accident. While in the hospital, as doctors worked frantically over him, they seemingly lost him several times, only to revive his vital life signs several times. He said that at one of these times, he actually left his physical body and went to a place where Jesus appeared and talked with him. He did not have time to tell all that the Lord said, but he emphasized with great emotion that the Lord told him to go back and "tell my people that I'm ready to come for my bride, but my bride is not ready." Only God knows the depth of the work which must be done in each one

who is to be a part of the chosen bride, but according to the Scriptures the bride must be ready.

In Matthew 25:10 we read that "those who were ready went in with him (Jesus) to the wedding." And in Revelation 19:7, the message is clear: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready." This again is a test for those who aspire to the high calling of the chosen bride. As they wait, lamps trimmed and burning (Luke 12:35), will they continue to "pursue" Jesus with all their hearts and make Him the supreme desire and love of their lives?

Third, the delay causes more time for sinners to be saved and enter the kingdom. 2 Peter 3:3-9 speaks of the time in which we live, wherein "scoffers" will say "where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." In other words, "you Christians say Christ is going to return soon, yet year after year goes by and all things continue just the same, so you must be wrong, for what you say seems ridiculous." But then Peter reminds us in verse 9 why the seeming failure on the part of God to fulfill what Christians keep heralding as a promise of Jesus' return: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." The Lord, in His mercy, delays, that more people might be reached with "saving news" of His glorious gospel and receive life unending.

Fourth, His delay gives more time for evil's "cup of iniquity" to come to its full. Read the Old Testament. You will find that always, before God brings judgment on a nation or people, the insidious "ferment" of evil has to fully permeate the society, or certain segments of the society, before God's fury can no longer be restrained and He "brings an end" to that which has become totally nonredeemable. When God is bringing an end to that which must be removed, He is also establishing something that has a fresh and new beginning. God made a covenant with Abraham and promised to him and his seed the land of Canaan. But God declared to Abraham concerning this promise: "you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, (the land of Canaan) for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." (Genesis 15:15-16). "Amorites" was a general term describing the people who inhabited Canaan at the time God made the promise to Abraham. God also told Abraham that his descendants will be "strangers" in a land that was not theirs and would be afflicted (in Egypt) 400 years, and also "that nation whom they serve, I will judge: afterward they (the seed of Abraham) shall come out with great possessions (Genesis 15:13-14). In other words, when the time came for Abraham's seed to be delivered out of Egypt, the iniquity of the Egyptians would also have come to its full, and with the judgments of the 10 plagues God would almost completely destroy that nation. Many other Biblical illustrations could be given, but I believe the preceding is sufficient to illustrate the point.

Now we're coming near to the end of 6000 years of man's probation, wherein the whole world (all nations) are involved in God's judgmental process. God has to consider the "fullness of iniquity" of all societies, or segments thereof, and bring the timing all factors to a "head" at the same time. A "delay" in the Lord's coming has given the Lord the opportunity to evaluate (in order to determine the degree of judgment) the depths to which man's degradation will go, and to determine and regulate the "boundaries" thereof. Even religion's "iniquity" must come to a full. Iniquity in religion? Yes, there's plenty of it. This is pictured symbolically in Revelation 17:1-6 where John sees a woman who was a harlot, "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication." Evil must be shown to be evil regardless of where it manifests, in the world or in religion, and if God decrees an extended time period to allow its abominable and filthy nature be manifest more fully, that God's purpose in its exposure is more fully fulfilled, and He is seen to be even more just when "the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation." (Revelation 14:10).

Fifth, to maneuver and "position" all nations for the final "Armageddon" (Revelation 16:16). We

know that the "Beast" (which we believe to be Russia, etc.) will continue to arm itself with many weapons including more nuclear ones. Our government has just announced a "Space Force" in order to deal with potential warfare (contemplate a possible attack from or coordinated at a space station).

Just think, during this time of the "delaying of the Bridegroom" how much greater the potential for destruction has increased. Certainly, God knew this would happen during such a delay. It seems that His desire is to intensify the horrific reality of man's depraved desires and hideous plans when under the control of Satan and his demonic hosts. Also, it seems God is going to give Satan the maximum time to build (and arm) a "Beast" power that will seem (in the natural) totally unchallengeable, so that when the final showdown comes, those nations which choose not to serve the Beast, will have to humble themselves and call on the Almighty for help. Although the Old Testament gives examples of how God supernaturally acted on behalf of His people (and will do so again in the final conflict of this age), God more often uses natural means, but directed by Him, to bring judgment and/or intervention. He uses one nation to judge another nation.

God will judge nations as well as individuals. If a nation were truly righteous, it would need no military arms for protection. God would be the absolute protection. But there is no such nation. Take the United States for example. Since we have turned our back on God in so many ways, and because we have sunk to the depths of moral pollution and degradation equaled only by ancient Sodom and Gomorrah, God is going to require that we fight for our very existence (as part of his judgment on us). But because there are many Christians in America who have been seeking God and praying, God may, in His mercy, choose to give us a president who is not afraid of or "deceived" by the "evil empire" of communism (and its cousin socialism). Because the Lord has "delayed," He has given our leaders the opportunity and courage to reverse the suicidal policy of unilateral disarmament which was previously being pursued. (no further comments on God's strategy for this nation at this time; much more needs to be said but will be saved for later).

During this time of "delay," all nations are being "weighed in the balance," tested and positioned for the final showdown. Dramatic changes have taken place in world nations. A lot depends on the foresight and determination of our American leadership. (more observations could be made concerning the "ebb and flow" in other parts of the world, but lack of space will not permit this time).

Finally, the Lord's delay gives mankind the opportunity to fulfill the first commission ever given to him as recorded Genesis 1:28; "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth." I believe that before the Lord returns to this earth, He has determined that (according to His perspective) the earth be filled up. I believe that from the beginning He planned that a specific number of human beings be given the opportunity to be born on this earth. Man has thwarted this purpose by murdering multiplied millions of babies (called "abortion"). This is not only a "stench" in the "nostrils" of God, but is hindering His purpose. Some might say that the earth is already over-populated. This is not true! In some places, yes, but this is only because of man's stupid practice of cramming millions of people into "ant-hills" called "cities." Nations that seem over-crowded, like India, could easily raise enough food for their own people and even export food products, if they did not allow millions of cows, mice, rats, etc. (that they worship and therefore cannot kill) roam the land eating millions of tons of food that should be eaten by humans.

I recently read that the population of the earth is 7.8 billion (Could God's goal be 8 billion? or?). That original commission to fill earth must be fulfilled.

Published by:
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This material was originally published as "My Lord Delayeth His Coming", September 1984. This material is still pertinent for today. I have rewritten and updated it. Donations are welcomed and will help to further this ministry. (updated: May, 2020)
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